

NOTE UPON A HYDROCEPHALIC CRANIUM OF UNUSUAL SIZE.

By E. D. BONDURANT, M.D.,

Assistant Superintendent of the Alabama Insane Hospital at Tuscaloosa.

ALTHOUGH but an imperfect account of the case can be given, the unusual size of the cranium, together with the fact that the patient lived to the age of forty-eight—most subjects of such extreme hydrocephalic enlargement die in infancy—and possessed a sufficient intelligence to earn a living for himself during a number of years, renders the case of some interest and justifies its record. The man died at the Insane Hospital fifteen years ago. The facts given are taken from the record books. The cranium is still in the pathological collection of the institution.

B. M. A., a white man, born in South Carolina, of American parentage. Father and mother, strong and vigorous, lived to old age. Patient was one of ten children; all living and in good health at time patient came under observation.

It is stated that at birth the head was abnormally large, though delivery was accomplished without especial difficulty. At six months of age it was remarked that the head of the infant was increasing in size; a progressive and very rapid enlargement continued during about six months, so that by the time patient was a year old his head had attained its present enormous proportions.

Patient was brought to Alabama by his parents in early youth, and later became known as an eccentric and rather amusing half-imbecile creature, with, however, a good deal of low wit and business acuteness, who earned a

living by vending cigars in the streets of Tuscaloosa and neighboring towns; at the age of forty, having become irritable and excitable, and being annoying to others, he was committed to the hospital as insane. The following facts were noted at time of admission: height, five feet three inches; weight, 125 lbs.; figure, much bent; gait, shambling and unsteady; convergent strabismus and nystagmus; pupil of right eye, widely dilated; horizontal circumference of head, 29 inches; physical examination of chest and abdomen, negative.

He remained at the hospital until his death, eight years later. There is no record of the autopsy, and consequently the amount of fluid contents and the general condition of the brain is unknown. The cranium was preserved. Its sutures are open; Wormian bones, numerous and large; marked asymmetry. Its principal dimensions are given below, with measurements (after Peterson) of normal male cranium for comparison.

	Average of normal male skull.	Skull of B. M. A.
Horizontal circumference	52.0 Mm.	70.6 Mm.
Anterior demi-circumference		32.4
Posterior demi-circumference		38.8
Naso-occipital arc	32.0	47.2
Binauricular arc	32.0	43.5
Antero-posterior diameter	17.7	24.8
Greatest transverse diameter	14.6	18.5
Binauricular diameter	12.4	11.5
Bi-zygomatic diameter		13.4
Index		71.7
		(Dolicocephalic)

The skull ranks well to the front of the reported instances of hydrocephalic enlargement, though several of greater size have been observed. Aitken mentions the head of a child measuring 29 inches in circumference; the head of Cardinal, a noted hydrocephalic man, of the London hospitals (died at Guy's, some years ago), was

33½ inches in circumference, and contained more than 10 pints of fluid; while in a case referred to by Blackader, 27 pints of fluid were removed, *post mortem*, from a hydrocephalic head.

The above very defective report is given for what it may be worth.

Destruction of the Pituitary Body.—Drs. Vassale and Sacchi made an extensive experimental study on the effects of the destruction of the Hypophysis or pituitary body in dogs and cats, and came to the following conclusions, published in the “*Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria, 1 de Medicina Legale*,” December 31, 1892:

1. The operation, indicated by the authors, permits of destruction of the pituitary body in dogs and cats with facility and precision.

2. The complete destruction of the pituitary body in dogs and cats is followed with serious consequences independent of any complication arising from the operation.

3. The partial destruction of the pituitary body in these animals is compatible with long life, but typical phenomena of functional insufficiency of the gland arise. The authors were not able to determine just what these phenomena were, but eventually they become aggravated and lead to a fatal cachexia.

4. The increase of the chromofil cells in the pituitary gland depended more upon a degenerative than upon a compensatory process.

5. Although the symptoms arising from the complete destruction of the pituitary body are somewhat analogous to those after extirpation of the thyroid body, yet we are not able to affirm that the two glands are in such close relation that in case of the destruction of the one, the other would perform the functions of the two in the needs of the animal economy.

6. Relative to the nature of the hypophysis, it must be placed with those glands of the body whose destruction gives rise to the formation and accumulation in the organism of special toxic substances.

W. C. K.